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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000450

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SUBJECT: INAUGURATION OF DJIBOUTI'S PRESIDENT FOR SECOND TERM

REF: ELECTORAL CABLE

Classified By: Ambassador Marguerita D. Ragsdale.
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) Djibouti's 58-year old current president, Ismail Omar Guelleh, was inaugurated May 7 for a second six-year term. The colorful ceremony, filled with traditional songs and dancing, took place in the main hall of the Palais du Peuple, a large air-conditioned convention facility with meeting rooms constructed by China as a gift to the people of Djibouti. Heads of state attending were Omar Bashir, President of Sudan, Girma Wolde-Giorgis, President of Ethiopia, and Paul Kagame of Rwanda. In addition, the President of the Transitional National Government of Somalia, Abdillahi Yousuf, also attended. Nations in the Gulf with high representation included the states of Qatar, Kuwait and UAE. Others were represented by their ambassadors in Djibouti or accredited to Djibouti, including Algeria, Oman, Japan, the UK, Uganda, Nigeria, the Vatican, France, India, and Egypt. The U.S. was officially represented by the Ambassador and General Mark Kimmitt, Deputy Director of Centcom J-5, standing in for CENTCOM Commander General Abizaid.

2. (U) The key components of the ceremony, which began with arrival of invitees at 0900 and ended with the conclusion of lunch for heads of state and selected invitees (including Ambassadors accredited to Djibouti) at 1500, were the oath of office and inauguration speech. Following his oath of office, which was sworn on the Holy Quran, Guelleh stated "I will be the President of all Djiboutian men and women without distinction of their ethnic or regional membership and without consideration for their political affiliation."

3. (U) In his lengthy inaugural speech, Guelleh made the following salient points: He reiterated his allegiance to the values of democracy and reaffirmed his commitment to consolidate peace, brotherhood, and national unity. He thanked the Djiboutian voters for their support and for showing "responsible and praiseworthy behavior" by not ceding to the temptation of "irreparable" acts. Guelleh also called to the patriotic sense of all Djiboutians to "combine our actions and efforts so as to engage our country in the path of prosperity and modernity." He also reaffirmed Djibouti's commitment to further promote a dynamic cooperation based on complimentary resources and underlined the country's unalterable faith in the necessary integration of Djibouti's fragile economy in the face of various uncertainties and challenges of globalization.

4. (U) Guelleh stated "Djibouti's aim for a global development means the promotion of our country in all social, economic, political and cultural fields and achieving development so that all Djiboutians could benefit from the fruits of progress." Citing the country's Integrated Framework Development Strategy as crucial to the reinforcement of infrastructure, Guelleh stated the integration of all the regions in the development process will enable the country to close the gap in socio-economic infrastructures between urban and rural areas. Guelleh said a priority is the inclusion of youth and women in the process to make the most of their potential and allow women to "fully enjoy their rights and consider themselves an active component of our society."

5. (U) In order to achieve its economic goals, Guelleh stated it was necessary to have cooperation between the private sector and the public sector. He said "it is up to all the socio-economic partners and above all the State, local authorities, public companies, private sector and social organizations to assume their responsibilities." He also called on the public services to facilitate the needs of social and economic actors in order to allow them to create investment and employment as well as develop the social and economic infrastructure. Guelleh placed regulation and development of infrastructure in poor areas as priorities for the state.

6. (U) Guelleh stated the Djiboutian people would be able to clearly see the benefits of the administration's objectives over the next six years through the improvement of their lives and gain benefit from necessary assistance, laying the

foundations for a balanced society, modernization of the productive structures through the promotion of their national wealth, and improvement of education and professional training adapted to the needs of the local economy while preserving their local cultural heritage, civilization and African and Arab-Islamic values. Guelleh also cited the reduction of social disparities through national and regional long-term planning, promotion of rural areas, urban planning, and protecting and preserving the environment as necessary actions. Priorities among national plans were strengthening Djibouti's position as a hub for business and financial services, information technologies, and port and airport services through trade incentives, infrastructure, transit services and the Free Zone. Development of the Djibouti-Ethiopia railway, with eventual destinations being Durban, South Africa and West Africa, and the reinforcement of Djibouti's exploitation and export of its salt resources were also cited as goals for the next six years.

17. (U) Guelleh noted cooperation within international organizations such as IGAD, the African Union, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and COMESA as an important tool to achieve to Djibouti's hope for regional stability, mutual development, and global peace. In order to achieve this, Guelleh said, "we should spare no effort on behalf of regional solidarity between neighboring countries and reinforcement of inter-arab states dialogue."

18. (C) Comment: Guelleh's speech is a verbal outline of his agenda for the next six years, which places an enormous importance on social and economic development. The importance placed on getting the development done right has also been seen in the rumors regarding who will be in Guelleh's new cabinet. Talk around town has been indicating that there will be a significant shake-up in the Ministries. In the past week or two, the general impression is that Guelleh will fill many of the key ministerial positions with either technocrats or professionals rather than politicians. As Guelleh is currently traveling to Brazil, the U.S. and France, announcements of new cabinet Ministers are not expected to begin until his return in two weeks. End Comment.
RAGSDALE